

TREASURE RIGHT HERE

Emeralds and Pieces of Gold Armor Recovered From the Sacred Lake of the Chibchas



Chibcha Pottery

TREASURES of a true El Dorado, solid gold and rare emeralds that belonged to an ancient civilization, have been in New York for the last few weeks and some of them are still here. The jewels in the pocket of a sack coat went back and forth through the corridors of the Waldorf and the hand wrought gold lay exposed to public view on Fifth avenue. It sounds like romance, but it's so.

At a Fifth avenue shop have reposed some of the pieces of gold armor recovered recently from the bottom of a lake in Colombia. Emeralds have been carried rather carelessly about by an engineer of one of the companies concerned in the recovery of the treasures supposed still to lie at the bottom of the lake. The story back of it all is as fascinating as that of the Incas or the chronicles of Aztec glories.

Much has been told of the treasures of El Dorado and of the search of the Spaniards for them. But the popular impression of El Dorado to a will-o'-the-wisp and implying that the Spaniards never found their goal is incorrect.

El Dorado was found and just where the Spaniards sought it—in South America. But they did not find El Dorado what they believed it to be, namely, a veritable land of gold. The real El Dorado was a man, the "Golden One" or the "Gilded Man," and he was found ruling the Chibcha kingdom, a nation having over a million inhabitants in as high a state of civilization as the Incas of Peru or the Aztecs of Mexico.

The Chibcha nation occupied a plateau in the northern Colombian Andes, over 4,000 feet above sea level. On this plateau were five small lakes known as Guatavita, Guasco, Siecha, Teusaca and Ubaquo. Of these, Guatavita, which occupied the most northerly part of the plateau, was sacred and played an important part in all the Chibcha religious rites and ceremonies. Circular, about a mile in circumference, its great depth of water appealed particularly to the Indian in making his offerings or sacrifices to his deities. To this day the old paths or roads leading from the principal towns and worn into the rocks by the tramp of millions and millions of feet are plainly visible.

In prehistoric times this great Andean plateau, the home of the Chibchas, was a vast lake or rather a string of lakes separated by short mountain spurs. The soil, of great fertility, was quite capable of supporting the enormous population found there by the Spaniards. One city, Ubaquen, is said to have had over a million inhabitants. This last statement may be taken with a grain of the proverbial salt, however, as the Spanish conquistadores were prone to exaggerate their accounts of lands no one else had ever seen.

But it may be that Lake Guatavita is one of the most valuable mines in the world, for in it are said to have been thrown as offerings to an evil spirit supposed to dwell in its depths gold and cunningly designed figures of gods of that virgin metal.

In 1539 Juan Rodriguez Fresle wrote a history of the discovery and conquest of New Granada and of El Dorado. This volume is thought to be the most accurate and detailed account of the Chibchas and their nation now extant. According to Fresle's account of the discovery of El Dorado, shortly after the founding of Quito in 1534 by Sebastian de Belalcázar, who was a captain under Pizarro, a strange Indian arrived from the north and told an unusual story of the ceremonies on Lake Guatavita, when asked the usual question as to the whereabouts of gold in that vicinity. Don Sebastian, knowing that Pizarro was jealous of him and desirous of getting him out of the way, determined to start immediately in search of El Dorado or the Golden Man. According to a custom of those days, he gave the name of the Province of El Dorado to his prospective conquest.

Don Sebastian chose a route into Colombia which led through the Cauca Valley and against the advice of his Indian guide travelled too far north and finally found himself in Cartage, a town at the extreme northern end of Colombia and many miles distant from Lake Guatavita. Meeting with difficulties at every turn he doubled back and arrived at Neiva in the Magdalena Valley only to learn that he had been forestalled by a few months only, by the famous Capt. Gonzalo de Quesada, who had reached Guatavita by way of the Magdalena River and had conquered the entire Chibcha nation.

About the time of Sebastian's arrival at Guatavita, Capt. Nicolas Federman also arrived there, having sailed from the Gulf of Maracaibo, in Venezuela, and entered the Chibcha country from the plains of the Orinoco. Together these three adventurers founded the city of Santa Fé of Bogotá in 1539, leaving soon after to return to Spain to relate their several stories of conquests in the Colombian district.

Aside from the vast quantities of gold and gems which tradition says were thrown into the lake through countless centuries in their religious ceremonies by the Indians, the greater portion of the private treasure of the Guatavita (as the ruler or prince-priest of the Chibchas was known) is said to have been thrown into the lake upon his defeat by the Spaniards. Many of the minor rulers of Chibcha tribes also threw their treas-

ure into the lake and one of these is related to have disposed of about two tons of gold and jewels in that manner.

Many attempts were made by the Spaniards to drain the lake and recover some of the wealth. De Quesada gave the lake to his lieutenant, Lasero Fonte, who lacked the necessary money to carry out his plans for drawing off the water. It then passed into the hands of de Quesada's brother, Hernando Perez de Quesada, who succeeded in lowering the water ten feet and taking out quite a quantity of gold and jewelled images.

As the lake was really a possession of the Spanish Crown these men had no authority to remove the treasure, and one Antonio de Sepulveda, a merchant of Santa Fé, realizing this, made the trip to Spain, where he obtained a concession of the lake and its contents. He subsequently spent a fortune on it and succeeded in getting out quantities of gold and emeralds which were turned over to the officers of the Spanish Crown. Sepulveda's contract with the Government called for an absolute draining of the lake, however, and the Government refused to divide the spoils with him until this was done. A scarcity of funds put an end to that attempt to drain the lake and, beyond experience, Sepulveda received little or nothing for his efforts.

Numerous minor attempts were later



Map Showing Location of Lake Guatavita

made to drain the lake, but no important results were attained. In 1823 José Ignacio Paris and Capt. Charles Stuart Cochran, R. N., made another unsuccessful effort to recover the treasure. In 1897, a Colombian company was formed to drain the lake, but after several vain attempts the company gladly sold out to the "Contractors, Ltd.," a company now in possession of the sacred lake of Guatavita. In spite of numerous drawbacks and a revolution the lake was finally drained dry in 1904.

Sand and mud to a depth of nearly fifty feet have been removed from the centre and along the ditch to the tunnel, through which the mud is being washed. Although the surface is now fairly hard the mud below is in a semi-liquid state and is continually pressing in from the sides to the centre, causing the bottom to form a cup, whereas when first drained the lake's bed was quite flat.

Many gold ornaments have been recovered within the last two years, together with a large collection of emeralds and strings of beads and a lot of quaint old pottery. It is conjectured that these have been carried to the centre by the pressure and movement of the mud from the sides. A steam shovel is to be erected in the centre soon and fifty more feet of mud removed. No great amount of treasure can be removed until the bottom of the lake is found, and that means the bottom as it was about four and a half centuries ago when the Spaniards arrived. When it is reached the searchers hope to find gold dust and nuggets, together with vast quantities of unbroken pottery containing gold, ornaments and jewels.

Nobody can estimate the value of the treasure which the lake contains, but if the histories written by the ancient Spaniards can be believed at all fabulous wealth will be regained from its depths. Guesses have from time to time been made as to the probable value of the treasure, and the most recent, that of M. de la Kier of Paris, puts the contents of the lake at 120 millions of pounds sterling. The lake is now practically dry and it should not be long before the whole truth is known.

According to Prescott's "History of the Conquest of Peru" and the story of the religious rites enacted upon the sacred lake of Guatavita told to Capt. Belalcázar by the strange Indian who led him north to the Chibcha country in 1534, the ceremonies of the Chibcha religion followed closely those of the Chinese Buddhists. Twice a year, at harvest time and on some other special occasion, such as the consecration of a new Guatavita or prince prelate, the entire Chibcha nation congregated in one of the principal cities and



Idol of the Chibcha Nation



The Lake Partially Drained Into Which the Treasures Were Thrown



Gold Shoulder Piece of the Chibchas

marched in a solemn procession, with music and banners flying, to the shores of this lake.

An ancient Chibcha tradition told of the reputedly unfaithful wife of one of the first caciques or guatavitas who was also supposed to dwell in the depths of the lake. Her lover, who was one of her husband's slaves, was impaled alive and his indignant heaped upon her that she threw herself into the lake, together with her daughter and a nurse. The three were supposed to occupy a magnificent house of coral at the bottom of the lake and to be on good terms with the serpent deity. Many of the offerings thrown into the lake were for her, the Chibchas believing that if well treated she might use her influence with the serpent for their good.

Following the consignment of the treasure to the water the Chibchas gave themselves up to a round of joyous festivity, drinking deeply and at great length of chicha, the fermented juice of the maize, a sparkling yellow liquor which was handed to Pizarro's followers "in golden vases of extraordinary size" by the women of the cacique's harem. Often these feasts became orgies and for days and weeks the people kept up a round of festivities. These ceremonies had been going on for hundreds of years before the coming of the Spaniards and in that time millions

of dollars worth of gold and jewels are supposed to have been consigned to the water, only a small portion of which has been recovered.

Among the treasures found is a breast plate of pure beaten gold measuring thirteen inches by ten inches and weighing eight ounces and eight pennyweights. Other finds are four solid gold birds with lizard heads, one of which is complete and has two gold nose rings; disks; two serpents of beaten gold, with the head welded on and standing erect with forked tongue and wearing earrings; the figure of a woman in gold supposed to represent the mother of the Chibcha race; a warrior's or cacique's skull cap in thin beaten gold, seven inches in diameter and weighing six ounces; two head bands in thin beaten gold and several smoothly beaten gold drinking cups. Numerous quaint articles of Chibcha pottery have been found which contained emeralds of a very fine quality, as well as quantities of gold nose rings, pendants, images and articles of adornment.

Apparently all of these things have come from the sides of the lake and have supposedly been carried toward the centre by the constant moving and pressure of the mud. It will be interesting to see what will come to light when the actual bottom of the lake is reached and the former treasure of the Golden Man and his people are finally recovered.



THE FOOLISH QUESTION BUREAU.

ALL DAY ANSWERING

Pennsylvania Information Bureau Kept Constantly Busy During Twenty-four Hours

PERHAPS one man in 100,000 is fitted by nature for a job here," said the chief of the Pennsylvania Station's information bureau, "but so far as I know no one so fitted has ever worked in the department."

"If one were born with enough patience, good nature and capacity for long suffering he'd probably lack the snap and quick mental action to answer the public's inquiries without stopping to think, and we have no time to think when the lines are busy—we must know without thinking."

"Patience, good nature, mild retorts and control of temper are acquired habits with us; sort of occupational diseases, you might say. I've seen a man with a boil on his neck and another on his leg that made him stand through his whole trick answer eighty questions an hour for five hours and not once utter a discourteous word. A minute after he'd taken off his telephone headpiece he'd be in a wordy war with another member of the force. I've seen that same man all but thrash his eight-year-old boy for asking questions that were perfectly proper for a bright, knowledge seeking youngster to ask his daddy. We put on our patience when we shed our coats for work, and courtesy is as much a part of the equipment as are the telephones."

"When a young man who has learned to read schedules and make up rates is transferred to us from the ticket department the hardest thing he has to learn is how to please. We put him to keeping records and the like till he absorbs a bit of the atmosphere and learns the routine. Then we give him a telephone without a mouthpiece so he can't talk back to those who are sometimes testy and insulting and let him listen to our conversations."

"In time he gets our viewpoint—that we are paid to be mild before the bully, always helpful and invariably courteous. He learns to whom he should say 'Good-by,' to whom 'You're welcome,' whether the inquirer would relish or resent a bit of familiarity—in short learns to know by the voice, from the manner of speech, from the way questions are put just what tone, what inflection, even what quality of language he should use."

"Then some Sunday when there is little to do we let him answer questions for an hour—not for long enough to get nervous and touchy. Some never get the ability to keep temper and not talk back; those we send to some department where they do not meet the public so intimately."

This information bureau answered 431,986 inquiries last year and will beat that record this year. On the Saturday before Labor Day four men answered 3,280 calls in eight hours. In one hour that day there were 332 in-

quiries, or 83 for each man. That means that each telephone connection was made, the questions asked and answered, the connection broken and the wire opened for the next applicant in a little less than forty-four seconds.

The bureau is on the west side of the big rotunda, with broad windows looking down upon the throngs and the tracks below, where the trains come and go. It is an ample room with only one door, that door leading into the corridor. On the door is printed "No Admittance," and it is the one door in the whole station that nobody's knock will open.

In the centre of the room is a double faced switchboard that could accom-

modate a dozen operators. On a rack above it are time tables for every branch of the Long Island and Pennsylvania systems, schedules of distances between all points, books of rates between all stations in the United States, books of connecting steamship rates, sailing dates; in fact documents giving information on every conceivable subject pertaining to travel. On the

walls are maps showing every town that may be reached if one starts from the Pennsylvania station.

Each operator wears a telephone headpiece that puts a receiver over each ear and a mouthpiece that rises from a sort of chest protector to his lips. His hands are thus free. The headpiece is attached to the switchboard by a cord long enough to let the operator go to any part of the room without breaking the connection. It's

usually to find things all in a mess in the end. Now if you want to go to Seattle you call "Information," tell him where you want to go, when you want to start, how much baggage you have and give your name and address.

He'll tell you what the fare will be, when the train leaves, what your sleeping car will cost, how long you'll have to wait in Chicago, where dining cars will



WHY DO THEY PUT THOSE FUNNY MARKS ON TIME TABLES?

be available; in fact he'll make out a complete schedule of times and expenses and tell you the minute you'll be in Seattle. If you wish he will tell you the best, the second best and the cheapest hotel in Seattle and give you their rates. Not only that, but he'll send a man to your house with your railway ticket, Pullman tickets and baggage checks so that you need give no further thought to your trip. As for your baggage, he'll check it from your apartment through to your hotel room or house address in Seattle. You bid your trunk good-by at the door and they'll be in your room in Seattle to greet you.

"We get a lot of what would seem to an outsider very foolish questions, and some are so outlandish that they even make us smile," said the chief, "but we always put a straight face and an even voice into the telephone. We take into account that going away from home is a thrilling, nerve stirring affair for many persons and that many more who are not accustomed to using the telephone become disconcerted and say things they do not mean into the receiver."

"Another cause of delay and sometimes annoyance is that many inquiries are made by persons talking for others who fear to trust themselves at the telephone. The conversation must be repeated to the prospective traveller and discussed."

"Here are a few samples of what nervous people say. We have jotted them down as they come in."

"I want to know the excursion rate for a corpse."

"Does the 11 o'clock train leave at 11 or 11:10?"

"I don't want to know about single fare; I'm married."

"I'm going to California and I want to take an elephant with me."

"Me want know train go station behind New Brunswick."

"No, I don't want Elizabeth, N. J.; just plain Elizabeth."

"Is Salisbury, Del., spelled like Salisbury, N. C.?"

"I want a round ticket, not a square one; I want to come back."

"How long does it take the baggage department to go to Wisconsin?"

"I want to go to Pittsburgh to-night. Can I get a seat in the room on the train?"

"Tell me when the seven dash eighteen train gets to New York?"

"Has the 1 o'clock train for Philadelphia got cars for people to ride on?"

"How long does the train stay in the stable?"

"What train does the track leave from?"

"What time does the station move out?"

"How long can I buy a ticket before the 9:15 goes?"

"When does the next train leave for to-morrow morning?"

"We know what they want and answer the question they mean to ask. We get such questions every day. A woman said to me only this morning: 'I'm going to Milwaukee; how long will I have to wait with the corpse in Chicago?' I knew instantly that she was taking a body to Milwaukee and answered as though her tongue had not revealed the horror that was in her heart."

"But it's a bit annoying when people ask what horse won the third race at Pimlico or want their water pipes mended. On April 1, when perhaps a thousand people call our number and ask for 'Mr. Train,' we answer: 'This is April 1. You are talking to the Pennsylvania station. Somebody's fooling you.' Even that answer often brings down wrath on our heads."

"We can tell about hotels in all cities, and we know when the curtain rises and what shows are on at the principal New York and Brooklyn theatres—have to be able to answer the patrons of our theatre trains."

"A man told me this morning that he was going to Long Island and wanted to take his boy's pet goat with him. It took fifteen minutes to make him understand that the goat must be crated and taken in the baggage car. A Yonkers man recently became indignant because five coops of chickens and two beds could not be taken into the passenger coach with him. An Englishman took many of our precious minutes last week explaining that he'd have nothing to do with our 'bloody baggage cars'—he wanted a 'luggage van.'"



I WANT A ROUND TICKET, NOT A SQUARE ONE.